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Bathing Beach Outbreak Control Protocol
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Background: Each year Maine experiences outbreaks associated with swimming in coastal area, rivers, lakes and other bodies of water contaminated with disease causing microbes. These outbreaks have occurred throughout the state at state, town and private facilities. Investigation and response to these outbreaks involve collaboration among different departments, programs and facilities including the Health Engineering, Division of Disease Control, Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory, Department of Conservation, Department of Environmental Protection, town offices and private businesses. Communication among all parties involved becomes essential to gathering information, deciding on the appropriate response and informing the public of the situation.

Purpose: The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance to individuals and agencies that respond to outbreaks involving sickness at bathing beaches. It is intended to ensure appropriate methods for reporting, communication, investigation and response.

Reporting:

- Reports of all illness associated should be made by: health care providers, hospitals, the ill individual, parent/guardian of ill individual and beach facility managers and personnel.
- Reports should be called to the Maine Bureau of Health, Division of Disease Control at: 1-800-8215821.
- The Epidemiologist on call will receive the report, assess the report and if appropriate, initiate further investigation.

Communication:

- If a report(s) initiates further investigation, the Division of Disease Control will contact the following agencies/individuals:
 - Health Engineering
 - Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory
 - Department of Environmental Protection
 - If it involves state parks:
 - Park Manager (who will contact Regional Director)
 - The manager of the facility in question
 - If it involves a private facility, the owner of the facility

- The Division of Disease Control will coordinate communication among all people/agencies involved in the outbreak. This can be accomplished through email, conference calls, etc.

Investigation:

Testing:

- Beach facilities will be requested to collect water samples in accordance with beach water sampling standards.
- Samples will be sent to the State Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory in Augusta or any other lab in Maine that is certified by the State Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory to conduct appropriate beach water tests. Sanitarians or park/facility personnel could transport samples. If transportation of samples is a challenge, other methods of transportation that could be considered include state police, medical courier, public health nurses, etc.

Assessment:

- State Field Staff will be dispatched to assess the facility and the need for further environmental testing.

Interviews:

- The Division of Disease Control will coordinate interviews with ill and well individuals to obtain epidemiological information.

Media:

- Inquiries by the media will be referred to Bureau of Health administration and if involving parks, the Dept. of Conservation.

Decision Process:

The investigation will provide information for decisions on any necessary action. This decision process will include the Division of Disease Control and the Health Engineering staff of the Bureau of Health, Bureau of Health Administration if necessary, and, in the event of a state-owned beach, other state agency personnel. Decisions will be communicated to beach owners and responsible parties.

Recommendations:

Based on epidemiological information with/without lab results, investigations will result in one or a combination of the following:

1. No actions will be taken.
2. Swimming area will be posted explaining risks of getting ill from swimming.
3. Recommend swimming area should be closed.
4. Recommend swimming area should be re-opened.
